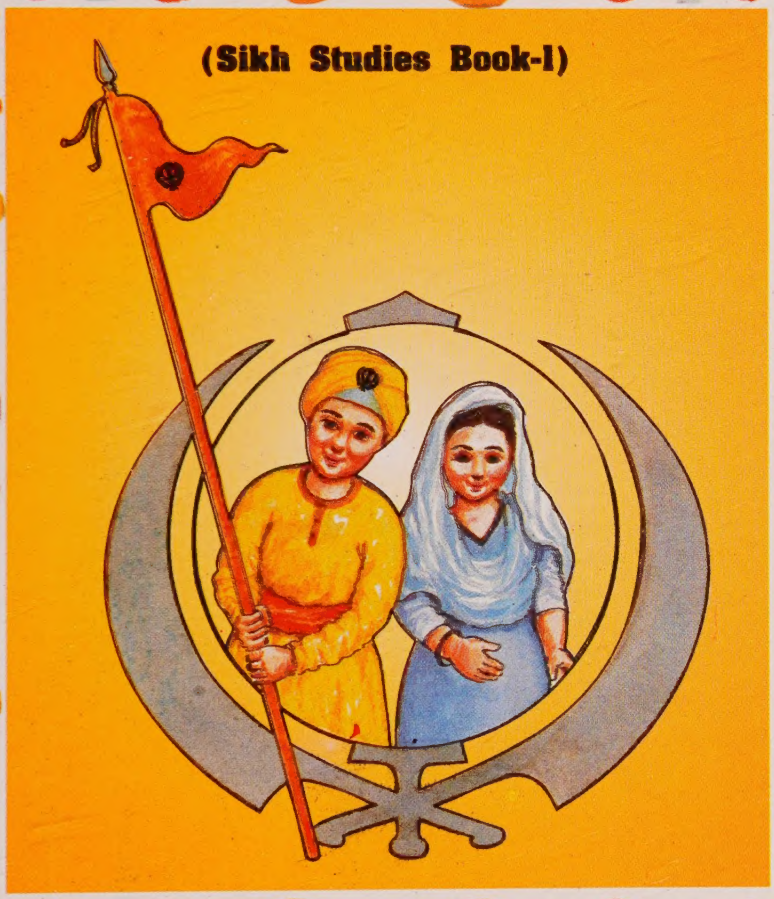
My First Book on SIKHISM

(Sikh Studies Book-I)



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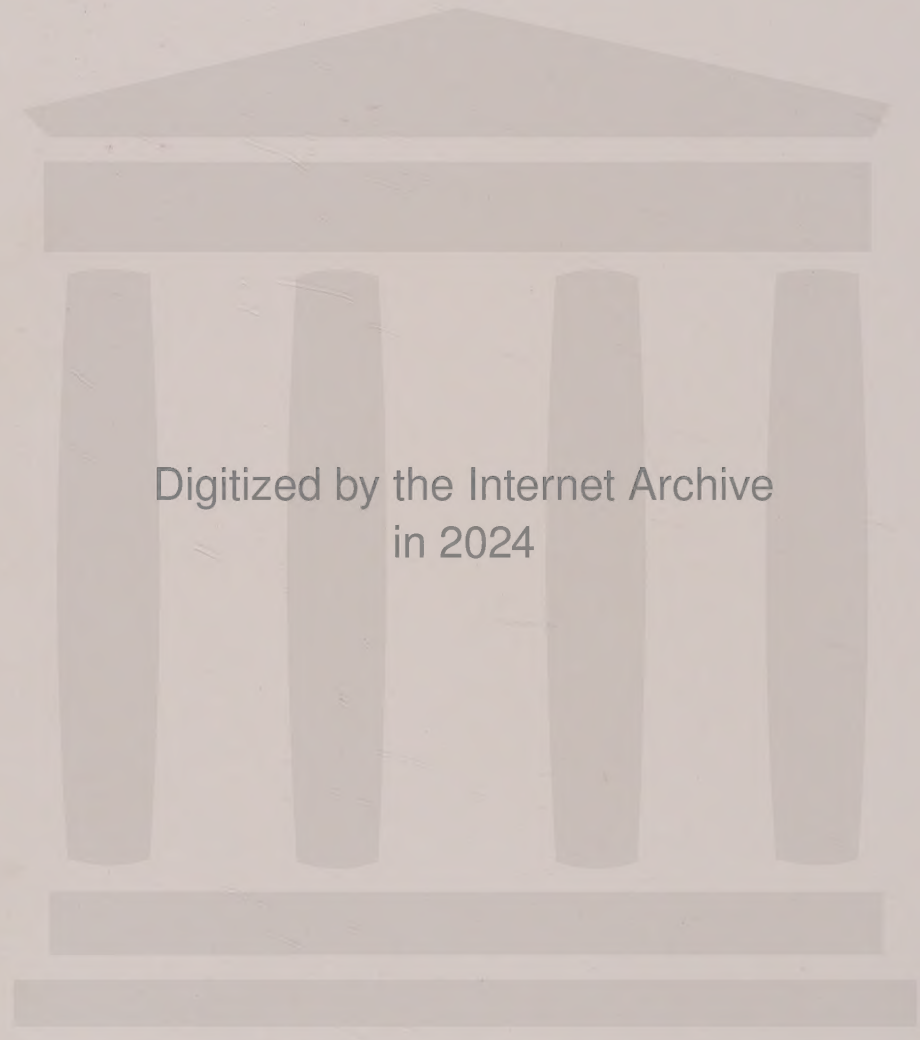

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MY FIRST BOOK ON SIKHISM

(SIKH STUDIES - I)

The Sikh Gurus, Institutions, Symbols, Personages, Practices and Festivals

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HEMKUNT

NOTE FOR THE TEACHERS AND PARENTS

Understanding different religions and the basic elements underlying them, lays the foundation for a good human being. Such understanding must be imparted at an early age.

Keeping this in view, Sikh Public Schools in India have introduced religious instruction known as 'Sikh Studies' or 'Divinity' as a compulsory part of their curriculum. The present series has been developed to provide them a complete course in the subject upto the secondary stage.

The series is also aimed at meeting the needs of Sikh children settled abroad by giving them graded tools for study at home or in a Sunday school. This will also be a good resource material for use in summer camps for Sikh children studying in other schools.

The series consists of the following books:

Book I-III are meant as a launching pad for a study of Sikhism by junior children. They cover the basic facts about Sikhism for beginners. As reading skills are being developed at this stage, illustrations are profusely given to be used as a fulcrum. We also solicit the support of parents and teachers for imparting knowledge. Hints for them have been given at the end of each chapter.

Book IV gives the complete *Ardaas* with pictorial cues for easy learning. The text is given in both Gurmukhi and Roman scripts with an English translation.

Book V-VII give *Sakhis* or stories about the Sikh Gurus. They have become a part of the folklore in Punjab. They most effectively convey the teachings of Sikhism in a manner traditionally accepted in all religions.

Book VIII gives similar *Sakhis* or stories about the Sikh Heroes. It thus covers the post-Guru Gobind Singh period of Sikh history. In fact it carries Sikh history, from Banda Singh Bahadur to Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Book IX is a formal culmination of the series for adolescent children. It introduces them formally to Sikh theology, ethics, psyche etc. after tracing the evolution of Sikhism.

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THE SIKH GURUS

Guru Nanak Dev

Guru Nanak Dev is the first Guru of the Sikhs. He is the founder of Sikh religion. He said all the people are children of one God.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Explain Guru Nanak Dev's attitude towards equality of all men by starting the tradition of religious congregation and *langar*. He did not believe in any rituals. Tell the story about his refusal to wear 'sacred thread' and his throwing water in the opposite direction at Hardwar.

Guru Angad Dev

Guru Angad Dev is the second Guru of the Sikhs. He was a disciple of Guru Nanak Dev. He spread Guru Nanak Dev's teachings.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

The spirit of devotion and dedication which made Guru Angad Dev dear to Guru Nanak Dev may be stressed. Tell children that he introduced Gurmukhi script and encouraged people to learn Punjabi.

Guru Amardas

Guru Amardas is the third Guru of the Sikhs. He was a disciple of the second Guru. He spread teachings of Guru Nanak far and wide. He carried on the tradition of *Langar*.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Tell the story of Akbar who took *langar* at Goindwal when he came to meet Guru Amardas.

Guru Ramdas

Guru Ramdas is the fourth Guru of the Sikhs. He founded the city of Amritsar. He spread Sikhism in North India.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

It would be interesting to tell the children the story of Amritsar which grew into a city over the years around '*Amrit Sarovar*' and thus how it got its name.

Guru Arjan Dev

Guru Arjan Dev is the fifth Guru of the Sikhs. He was the youngest son of Guru Ramdas. The building of the Golden Temple was started by him. Guru Granth Sahib was also compiled by him.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Children may be told about his arrest and martyrdom. The concept of *Daswandh* which was started by Guru Arjan Dev may also be briefly explained.

Guru Hargobind

Guru Hargobind is the sixth Guru of the Sikhs. He was the only son of Guru Arjan Dev. The Moghul kings were forcing people to become Muslims. The Guru fought against this. He got the Akal Takhat built at Amritsar.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

The story of the Guru carrying two swords may be told to introduce the concept of *Meeri* and *Peeri*—temporal power and spiritual strength.

Guru Har Rai

Guru Har Rai is the seventh Guru of the Sikhs. He was the grandson of Guru Hargobind. Like Guru Hargobind, he made Sikhism strong and popular.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

The story of the Guru being called to Delhi by Aurangzeb may be told. The Guru instead sent his elder son Ram Rai and explain how the latter's behaviour there by misinterpreting the Sikh scripture displeased the Guru.

Guru Harkrishan

Guru Harkrishan is the eighth Guru of the Sikhs. He became Guru at the age of five. He was the youngest son of Guru Har Rai. Gurdwara Bangla Sahib is built at the place where the Guru stayed when he came to Delhi.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

During his stay in Delhi he cared and cured many people who were suffering from cholera. Children should seek inspiration from such a young Guru in imbibing values of self-sacrifice, truthfulness and care for others.

Guru Tegh Bahadur

Guru Tegh Bahadur was the youngest son of Guru Hargobind. He is the ninth Guru of the Sikhs.

The Moghul king was forcibly converting the Hindu *pandits* of Kashmir to Islam. The *pandits* came to Guru Tegh Bahadur for help.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

The story of Kashmiri *pandits* who came to seek his advice for being forcibly converted to Islam may be told. Also tell the story of his martyrdom. It may be emphasized that the Guru sacrificed his life to protect their religion.

Guru Gobind Singh

Guru Gobind Singh is the tenth Guru of the Sikhs. He was the only son of Guru Tegh Bahadur. He started the Khalsa order. He said that the Guru Granth Sahib will be the Guru after him.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

The sacrifices made by Guru Gobind Singh, particularly the sacrifice of his four sons, will be of interest to the children. The story of the founding of the Khalsa order in 1699 may be told.

Guru Granth Sahib

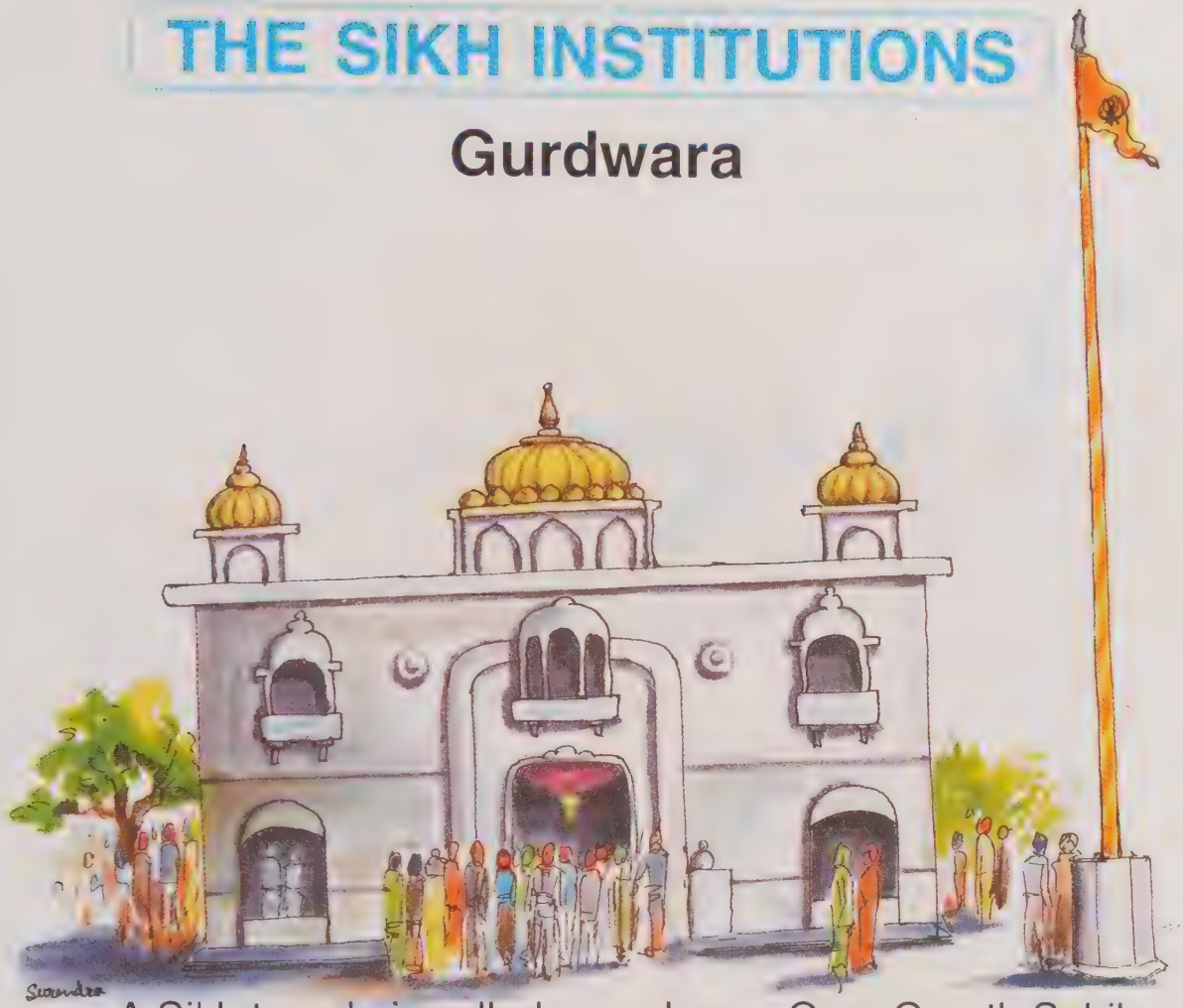
Guru Granth Sahib is the holy book of the Sikhs. It was compiled by Guru Arjan Dev. It has writings mainly of the Sikh Gurus, and some of Muslim fakirs and Hindu saints. Guru Gobind Singh said that this holy book shall be the Guru after him. It is kept in all gurdwaras.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Tell the children that there is no living Guru after Guru Gobind Singh. Holy book—Guru Granth Sahib— containing "Gurus' word" is the only eternal Guru of the Sikhs.

THE SIKH INSTITUTIONS

Gurdwara



A Sikh temple is called a gurdwara. Guru Granth Sahib is kept here. It is a place of worship but not of idol worship. A gurdwara can be known from a distance by the tall *Nishan Sahib*. *Langar* is served in most gurdwaras. They are open to all. Many Sikhs have private gurdwaras in their homes.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Children should be told about the significance of a gurdwara as a place for religious and social functions. Concepts of *Charhawa*, *prasad*, voluntary service of cleaning the premises, keeping shoes and community kitchen *langar*, may be brought out. The idea of humility and equality behind these concepts should be stressed.

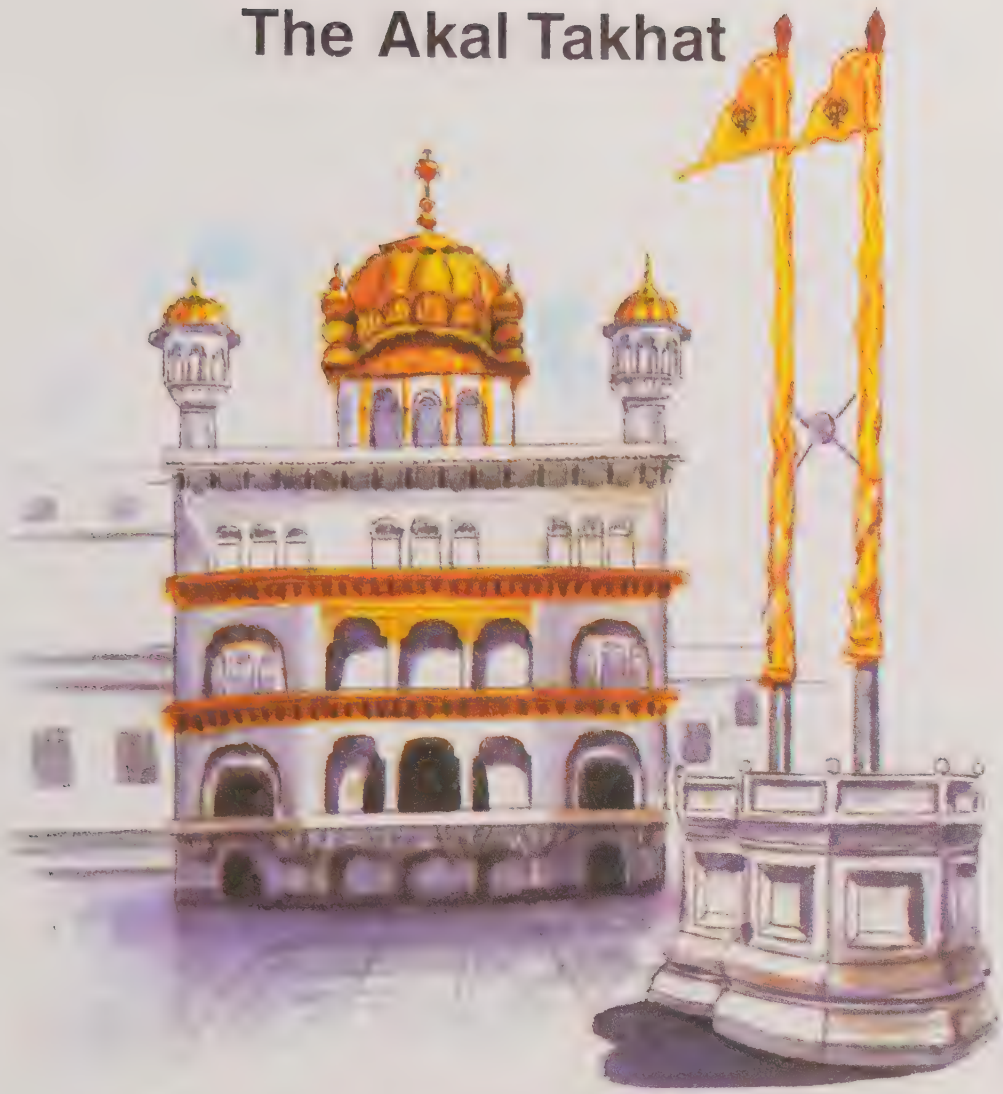
The Golden Temple

The Golden Temple is the most important gurdwara for the Sikhs. It was built by Guru Arjan Dev. It is in Amritsar. It is called the Golden Temple because of the gold plating done on it. It is also called Harmander Sahib or Darbar Sahib.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Tell children that Golden Temple is the most holy and chief shrine for the Sikhs. It is built in the middle of a square tank. Also mention that the foundation stone was laid by a Muslim saint. Many Hindus visit it. It has four doors–one in each direction–indicating that it is open to all.

The Akal Takhat



Among the gurdwaras, some have special importance for the Sikhs. They are called *Takhats* meaning thrones. There are five such *Takhats*. Akal Takhat is the oldest and the first *Takhat*. It is inside the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar. It was built by Guru Hargobind.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

This is the stage to explain briefly the concept of *Meeri* and *Peeri*. Tell that while Golden Temple is the most important gurdwara, the Akal Takhat is the highest seat of justice and worldly activity.

Takhat Keshgarh Sahib

Keshgarh Sahib is a very important gurdwara at Anandpur Sahib in Punjab. This is the place where Guru Gobind Singh had started the Khalsa order.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Children should be told the story of the creation of the Khalsa brotherhood by Guru Gobind Singh on the Baisakhi of 1699 AD, explaining the *Panj Piaras* and five K's.

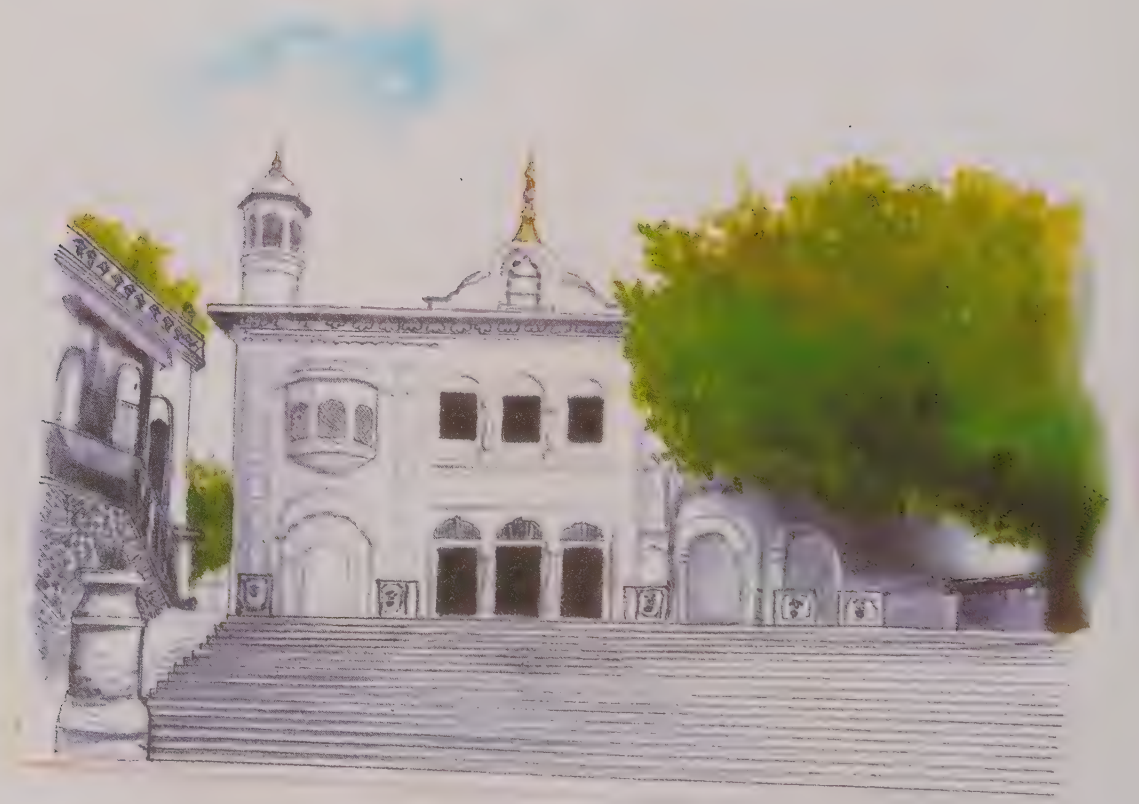
Takhat Sri Harmander Sahib

Sri Harmander Sahib is a very important gurdwara in Patna, Bihar. It is the birth place of Guru Gobind Singh.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Tell the children that important places of Sikhs are not confined to Punjab alone. Also tell some stories about Guru Gobind Singh's childhood.

Takhat Hazur Sahib

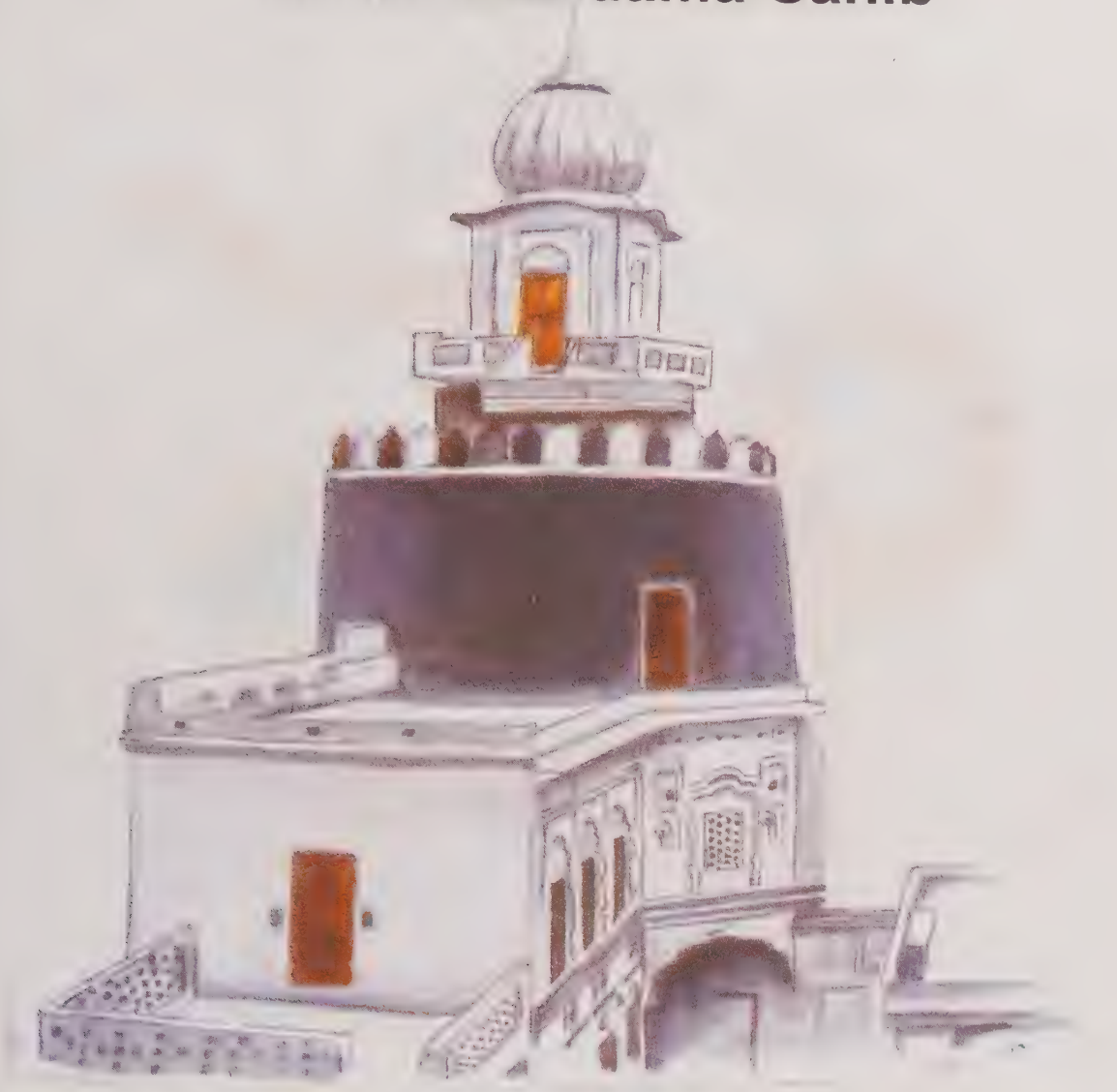


Hazur Sahib is a very important gurdwara in the city of Nanded in Maharashtra. Guru Gobind Singh died here. It was here he passed permanent Guruship to Guru Granth Sahib before his death.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Tell the story of how hired Pathans stabbed Guru Gobind Singh. Also tell his meeting with Banda Singh Bahadur here as well as how he declared Guru Granth Sahib as the eternal Guru after him.

Takhat Damdama Sahib



It is situated at village Talwandi Sabo in Punjab. Guru Gobind Singh stayed here for nearly a year and prepared the revised version of the Guru Granth Sahib.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

The importance of Damdama Sahib should be brought out by the contributions made by Guru Gobind Singh while staying here mainly in revising and recompiling the scriptures.

THE SIKH SYMBOLS

Ik Onkar

"Ik Onkar" is an important symbol of Sikhism. It gives the concept of God as one. These are the first two words of *Mool Mantar* in the beginning of Guru Granth Sahib.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

The children should recite *Mool Mantar* and explain to them the other attributes of God.

The Khanda

The *Khanda* is the emblem of the Khalsa. It has the following three parts:

1. Two-edged sword at the centre. This itself is known as Khanda.
2. Chakkar (an iron ring)
3. Two swords on either side of the Chakkar.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Explain the significance of the various components of the Khanda. The two edged sword symbolizes disintegration of false pride and inequalities. Chakkar exhorts the Sikhs to serve the whole creation. The two swords represent *meeri* and *peeri*.

Five Kakaars

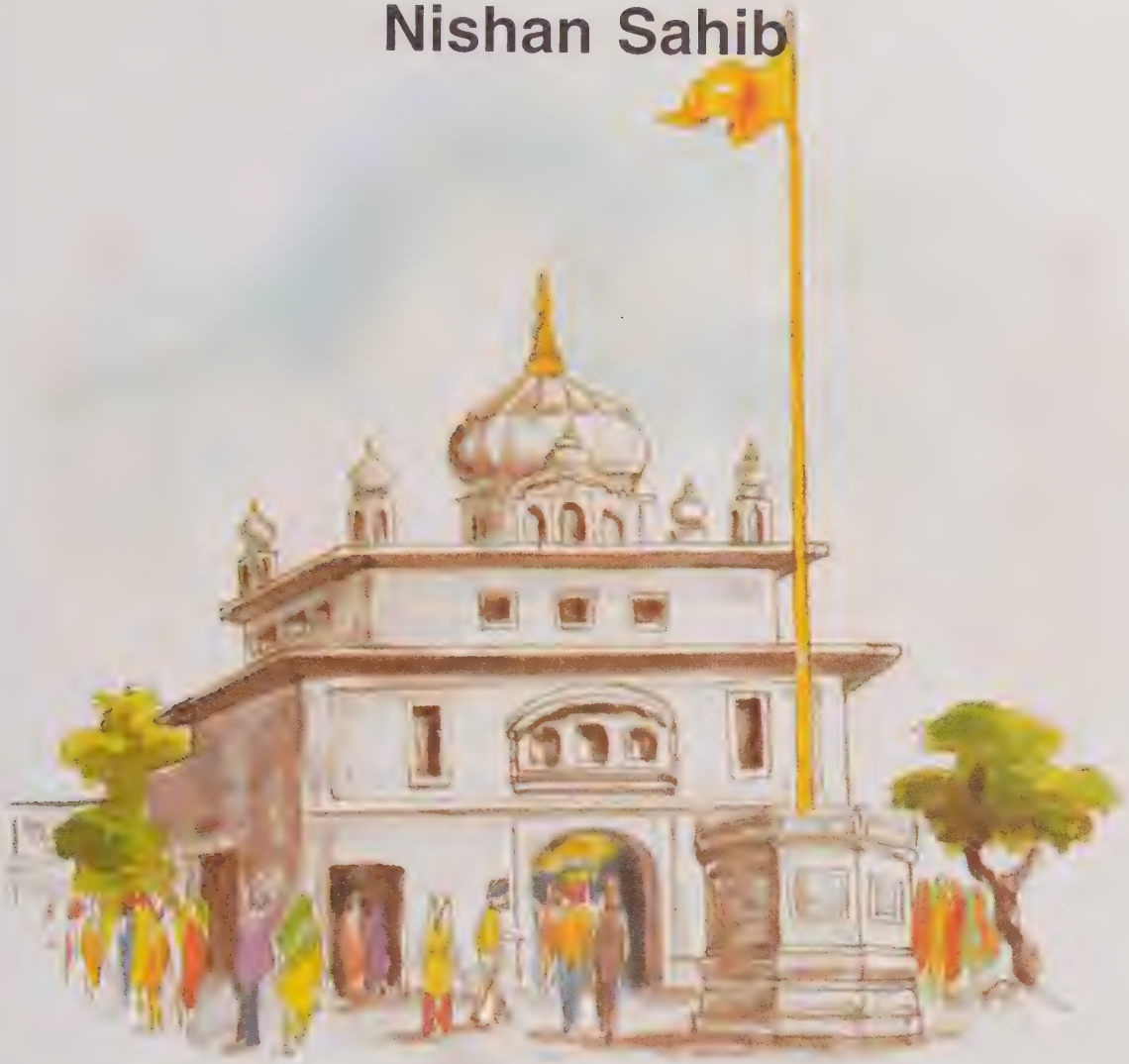
The five symbols of the Sikhs are called *Kakaars*. Guru Gobind Singh said that every Sikh must wear these. They are known as *Kakaars* because their names begin with K. They are :

1. *Kesh* : Uncut hair
2. *Kara* : Iron bracelet
3. *Kangha* : Comb
4. *Kirpan* : Sword
5. *Kachha* : Drawers or short pants

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Tell the children that five K's are the mark of identity and belongingness to the Khalsa order.

Nishan Sahib



Nishan Sahib is the name given to the flag of the *Khalsa.* It is saffron in colour, triangular in shape and the *Khanda* drawn on it in black. The flag post is also generally covered with a saffron cloth and has a metallic *Khanda* at the top. The Nishan Sahib is fixed in every gurdwara.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

The children at this stage should be able to recognize *Nishan Sahib* and distinguish it from other similar flags.

PANJ PIARE

Guru Gobind Singh started the new Khalsa Panth on the Baisakhi day of 1699 A.D. He chose the first five Sikhs among the people who had assembled on that day. These first five Sikhs who were given *amrit* on that day are called *Panj Piare* – the five loved ones. They were: Daya Ram, a khatri; Dharam Das, a jat; Mohkam Chand, a washerman; Sahib Chand, a barber; Himmat Rai, a water carrier. Now the term is used for any five devout Sikhs leading a procession.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Tell the story as how *Panj Piare* were selected and the diversity of castes of *Panj Piare* before initiation. Also tell that the Guru then took amrit from them and their names were changed from Gobind Rai to Gobind Singh and of Panj Piare to Dharam Singh, Daya Singh, Mohkam Singh, Sahib Singh and Himmat Singh. Also they were given special form by wearing five *kakaars* and it was ordained that the names of all Sikh men must end with "Singh" (Lion) and of the women with "Kaur" (Princess).

CHAR SAHIBZADE

Four sons of Guru Gobind Singh are affectionately called *Char Sahibzade*. They are remembered every time *Ardaas* is said. This is because they sacrificed their lives for the cause of Sikhism.

Sahibzada Fateh Singh

He was 6 years old when he was bricked alive at Fatehgarh Sahib in Punjab.

Sahibzada Zorawar Singh

He was 8 years old when he was bricked alive alongwith his younger brother on the orders of the Governor of Sirhind.

Sahibzada Jujhar Singh

He was 14 years old when he sacrificed his life in the battle of Chamkaur.

Sahibzada Ajit Singh

He was the eldest son and was 18 years old when he sacrificed his life in the battle of Chamkaur.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Talk about the sacrifices made by Guru Gobind Singh for Sikhism. Also recount how bravely elder Sahibzadas fought at Chamkaur Sahib and how resolutely the younger ones refused to be converted to Islam.

Paath

Paath means recitation or reading of Gurbani from Guru Granth Sahib.

Akhand Paath means the recitation of the entire Guru Granth Sahib without any break. It takes about 48 hours to complete. It ends with *Ardaas* and then *Karah Prasad* is distributed.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Significance of reciting the True Name (*Nam Japna*) and the status of the Guru Granth Sahib may be brought out. Children may also be told about the important occasions when Akhand Paath is organised.

Shabad Kirtan

Shabad Kirtan is the singing of hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib. Generally Guru Granth Sahib is present at the time of *Shabad Kirtan*. *Shabad Kirtan* is a part of most of the religious ceremonies of the Sikhs.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

At this stage, children must know the discipline of participating in it by taking off shoes, covering one's head, sitting on the floor facing Guru Granth Sahib and listen quietly the *Kirtan* which is *Shabad* of the Guru.

The Ardaas

The *Ardaas* is the common prayer of the Sikhs. It is usually recited at the beginning and end of an important occasion. This is a way of remembering God, the Gurus and the sacrifices made by Sikhs in history.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Though written by Guru Gobind Singh and later expanded by Bhai Mani Singh, further additions have been made by edicts of the Akal Takhat. Thus the *Ardaas* seems to encapsulate the on-going history and unity of Sikhs. Important occasions when the *Ardaas* is recited should be made known to the children.

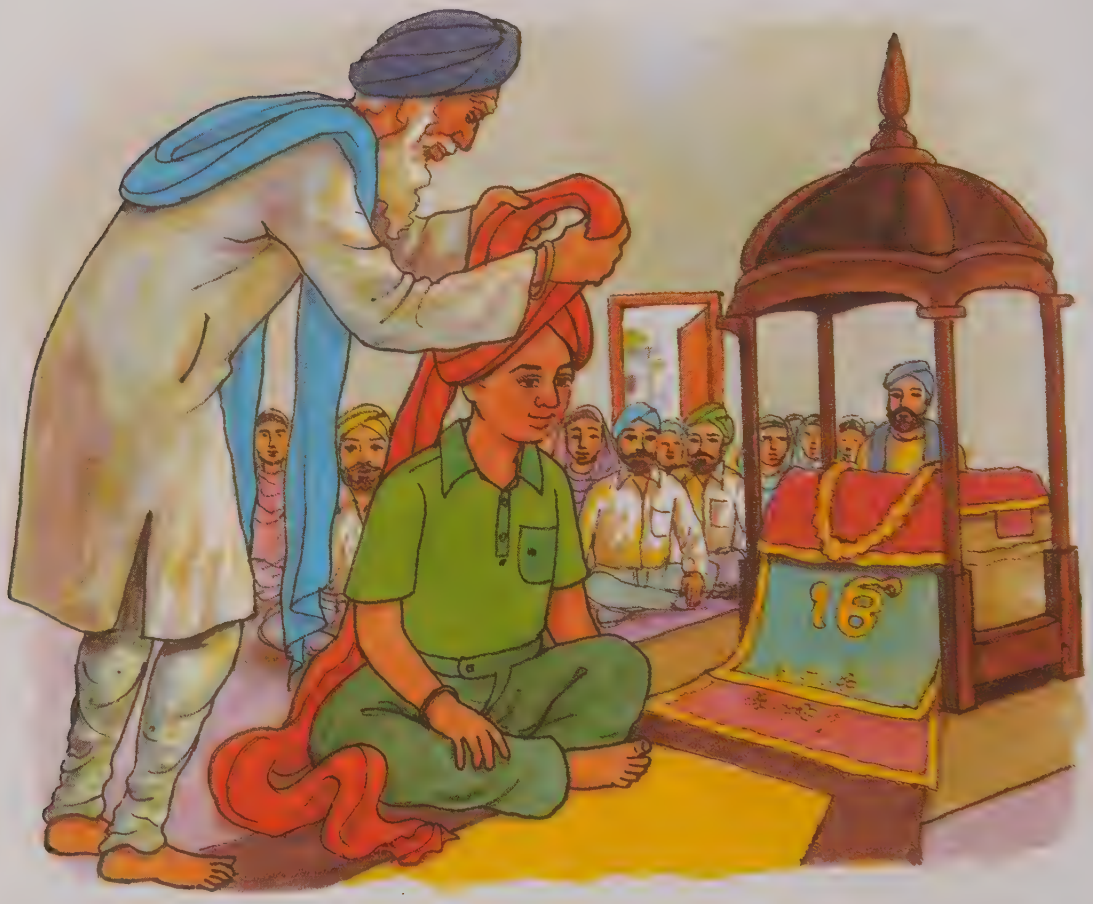
Langar

Langar is the free community kitchen. It is an essential part of gurdwaras today. Uncooked food items are bought from the contributions of all. Food is cooked by volunteers. It is eaten by people of all castes and religions sitting together in a row. Guru Nanak Dev started this idea. It was carried on by other Gurus.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

The children may be introduced to the fact that in Sikh religion there is no caste system. The concepts of equality, sharing and charity may also be emphasised at this point.

Dastaar Bandi



The ceremony of tying a turban to the male child is called *Dastaar Bandi*. This ceremony is performed at a gurdwara or at home in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. For Sikhs the turban is a part of their dress because it serves as a protection for the *Kesh* (hair) on the head and it gives special form to the Sikhs.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Explain that the wearing of a turban is a must for the Sikhs as part of their dress. Boys around 13-14 years of age should start wearing it. '*Patka*' is a convenient substitute for younger boys.

THE SIKH SALUTATION

The popular greeting among the Sikhs when they meet at any time of the day or night is to say with folded hands: *Sat Sri Akal*, which means: The Timeless is True.

Guru Gobind Singh had earlier prescribed the greeting: *"Waheguru ji ka Khalsa; Waheguru ji ki Fateh."*–Which means: The Khalsa belongs to God; victory also belongs to Him. This form of greeting is still used by devout Sikhs and in religious functions.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Tell the children that after the martyrdom of Banda Bahadur the war cry of the Sikhs used to be *"Jo Bole so Nihal, Sat Sri Akal."* This was to hoodwink the enemy about their numbers.

THE SIKH FESTIVALS

GURPURAB

Gurpurab is a common name for the religious celebrations of the Sikhs. It is generally a celebration of the birth or death anniversary of a Guru. The birthdays of Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Gobind Singh and also the martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur are celebrated by the Sikhs all over the world. Celebrations mostly consist of *Akhand Path, Kirtan, Diwan, Procession and Langar.*

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Experience of participating in *gurpurab* celebrations is very important. Children should be made to undergo all aspects of the celebrations as soon as possible.

BAISAKHI

Baisakhi is the traditional north Indian harvest festival. It existed even before the days of Guru Nanak Dev.

It was on the Baisakhi day in 1699 AD that Guru Gobind Singh started the Khalsa Panth. Since then Baisakhi has got a very special importance for the Sikhs.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Tell the children that it is the birthday of the Khalsa. Also explain the association of Bhangra dance with this festival.

HOLA MOHALLA

Guru Gobind Singh did not approve of playing Holi—throwing coloured water on each other. In order to provide an alternative to Holi, Guru Gobind Singh started the celebration of *Hola Mohalla*. The first *Hola Mohalla* was organised by Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur Sahib. It consisted of mock battles, archery and wrestling contests.

The above pattern of celebrations has continued upto the present times. Thousands of Sikhs visit Anandpur Sahib on this day. The culmination is a grand procession.

Hola Mohalla always falls on the day following Holi.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Mythological basis for the celebration of Holi by the Hindus may be explained.

DIWALI

Diwali is a major festival of India. Its association with Sikhs started when Guru Amar Das asked the Sikhs to come to Goindwal on every Diwali and Baisakhi. Also in 1597 AD the building of the Golden Temple was started on the Diwali day.

Most importantly Diwali is celebrated by the Sikhs to mark the release of Guru Hargobind from the Gwalior fort in 1619 AD. On the Diwali day after the release, the Golden Temple was illuminated. The tradition has since been continued upto the present times. Now the fireworks and lights are displayed at Golden Temple and other gurdwaras.

Sikhs do not indulge in any special worship of idols or money on this day. They however display lights at their homes.

Hints for Parents and Teachers :

Explain the Hindu mythology on which the celebration of Diwali among the Hindus is based. Sikhism being against gambling which is common on Diwali, must be emphasized.

QUIZ ON SIKHISM

THE SIKH GURUS

1. Who is the founder of Sikhism?
2. Who was the last living Guru of the Sikhs?
3. Name the sixth and eighth Guru of the Sikhs.
4. Who started the Khalsa Panth?
5. Who is the present Guru of the Sikhs?

THE SIKH INSTITUTIONS

1. Mention one important feature of a *gurdwara*.
2. Who got the Guru Granth Sahib compiled?
3. Who founded the city of Amritsar?
4. Who built the Golden Temple?
5. Who built the Akal Takhat?
6. Name the five Takhats.
7. Give two other names by which the Golden Temple is referred to in common speech.

THE SIKH SYMBOLS

1. What does the expression *Onkar* mean?
2. Name the weapons which constitute the emblem of *Khanda*.
3. What is the difference between *Khanda* as a weapon and *Khanda* as an emblem?
4. What is the shape of the *Nishan Sahib*?
5. What is at the top of the flag post of the *Nishan Sahib*?

6. What is the colour of the *Nishan Sahib*?
7. Where do you generally see a *Nishan Sahib* fluttering high in the air?
8. Name the five *Kakaars*.
9. Which Guru gave us the five *Kakaars*?

THE SIKH PERSONGES

1. Name the four Sahibzadas in order of age.
2. Which Sahibzadas died fighting in the battle of Chamkaur ?
3. Name the Sahibzadas who were bricked alive.
4. Give the names of five first *Panj Piare*.

SIKH PRACTICES

1. Which Guru asked the Sikhs to assemble on Baisakhi and Diwali?
2. Can Muslims and Christians also visit *gurdwaras*?
3. Can low-caste people of whatever community partake food at a *langar* ?
4. Give two important features of *langar*.
5. What is the approved ending of a boy's name among the Sikhs? What does it mean?
6. What is the approved ending of a girl's name among the Sikhs? What does it mean?
7. How long does the *Akhand Path* take to complete?
8. What is the name of the general prayer of the Sikhs?
9. How do Sikhs greet when meeting each other?
10. At what age a Sikh boy start wearing a turban?

THE SIKH FESTIVALS

1. Name one *Gurpurab* in which you have or you would like to participate.
2. Give two most important features of Gurpurab celebrations.
3. Why Baisakhi has special importance for the Sikhs?
4. How is *Bhangra* dance associated with Baisakhi?
5. Who organised the first Hola Mohalla at Anandpur Sahib?
6. Do Sikhs throw coloured water while celebrating Hola Mohalla?
7. Hola Mohalla falls before or after Holi?
8. The building of Golden Temple was started on which day?
9. How is Diwali associated with Guru Hargobind?
10. Do Sikhs worship idols or money on Diwali day?
11. Are Sikhs supposed to gamble?

© Hemkunt Press
First Published 1991
Tenth Revised Impression 1998
Reprinted 1999, 2001
New Revised Edition 2002

ISBN 81-7010-206-5

SIKH STUDIES
(For Class I-X)

Book I - (My First Book on Sikhism)
The Sikh Gurus, Institutions, Symbols, Personages, Practices & Festivals

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Book III - Sikh Theology and Ethics

Book IV - The Illustrated Ardaas

Book V - Guru Nanak Dev

Book VI - Guru Angad to Guru Harkrishan

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Hemkunt Press
A-78, Naraina Industrial Area Phase-I, New Delhi-110 028
Tel.: 579-2083, 579-0032, 579-5079 Fax: 91-11-611-3705
E-mail: hemkunt@ndf.vsnl.net.in
Website: www.hemkuntpublishers.com

ISBN 81-7010-206-5
9 788170 102069
Rs. 35.00

P9-EAD-120